



ELL 316 – Satire

Asst. Prof. Michael D. Sheridan

Tuesday 12⁰⁰–13⁰⁰ (H-205)

Thursday 16⁰⁰–18⁰⁰ (H-210)

Office Hours: Friday 10⁰⁰–13⁰⁰ (B-157)*

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Course Description

Satire is a literary, and extra-literary, phenomenon whose form and definition have long proven as difficult to pin down as Proteus. From its apparent origins in prehistoric belief in the magical power of words (specifically, curses) through to the #satire hashtag abundant on Twitter and TikTok today, satire has worn a bewildering variety of masks in almost every medium of creative human endeavor. This course will not (necessarily) provide a definitive answer as to what satire is, but it will provide a survey of cultural material often considered to be “satire” from ancient times to the present day. While the course will concentrate largely on literary satire in the English language from medieval times to the 20th century, the material at the beginning of the course will focus on the origins of Western satire in the “classical languages” (Greek and Latin), while the material at the end of the course will focus on satirical discourse in such media as film, television, and stand-up comedy.

Course Format

Although there will be occasional lectures or mini-lectures outlining, for example, the historical, sociocultural, and literary background of the material on which we focus, for the most part this course is a reading- and discussion-based course. Therefore, you will be expected and required to come to each class having read/viewed, thought about, taken notes on, and prepared questions and/or comments relating to the assigned material. Each class will then proceed according to your preparation as we discuss, debate, and (hopefully) clarify our thoughts and ideas.

Please note that, in the classroom, I rarely use slides but make frequent and heavy use of the blackboard/whiteboard. As such, it will be to your benefit to come to each class prepared to take notes. While you are of course welcome to take notes in any manner you wish, it is worth noting that numerous neuroscientific studies have shown that taking notes by hand with pen/pencil and paper is more beneficial than typing (or taking pictures of the board) for learning and retaining information, as well as for understanding and synthesizing concepts.

* Please note that, simultaneously with these physical office hours, I will also hold online office hours via Zoom; the Zoom meeting ID and passcode will be shared and pinned on the Moodle announcements page.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ✓ recognize, identify, and understand the elements of satire and related genres/modes, as well as the relation of satirical discourse to other literary genres/modes
- ✓ describe how satirical discourse developed over time in connection with contemporary historical, sociocultural, and intellectual developments
- ✓ analyze and evaluate satirical works produced in a range of different media

Course Materials

All texts for the course will be provided for you via the course Moodle page, mainly in PDF format. However, I strongly recommend that you print out paper versions of the texts and read them that way: this is because reading physical copies of texts allows better annotation and note-taking as compared to electronic versions, and therefore facilitates more active engagement in the classroom and better understanding as a whole.

Extra-literary materials (*i.e.*, artwork, film and television clips, etc.) will also be provided for you by way of Internet links or other means.

This course focuses on primary-source material (*i.e.*, actual examples of satire) and not on secondary-source material (*i.e.*, introductory, critical, and/or analytical texts); nevertheless, occasionally I may assign some secondary-source readings as necessary, and any such readings will be announced in class and/or via email or Moodle.

Grading

Your final grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

Ongoing (formative) assessment (35%)

- **Attendance and participation (15%)**

Because, as noted above, this is a reading- and discussion-based course, regular attendance at and active participation in class are expected and required. The attendance portion of your grade counts for 5% of your total grade (determined based directly on the percentage of class-hours attended), while the participation portion of your grade counts for 10% of your total grade.

- **Assignments (20%)**

Over the course of the semester, you will write a total of four (4) short (between approximately 350 and 750 words) short assignments, with each individual assignment worth 5% of your total grade. More details about these assignments will be provided in the first week of class, as well as periodically throughout the semester.

Summative assessment (65%)

- **Midterm examination (20%)**

Around Week 9 of the semester, there will be a midterm examination covering the material from Weeks 1 through 8. More information about this exam will be provided in due course.

- **Final project (20%)**

You will be expected to prepare a final project, for which there will be both analytical (*i.e.*, an essay) and creative (*i.e.*, an original satire or an adaptation of one of the assigned satires) options. More information about this project will be provided in due course.

- **Final examination (25%)**

During the final examination period (May 30–June 10), there will be a comprehensive final examination covering the material from Weeks 1 through 14. More information about this exam will be provided in due course.

Statement on Academic Integrity

TED University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. Such a level of ethical behavior and academic integrity will be expected in this course. Participating in behavior that violates academic integrity—*e.g.*, unauthorized collaboration on homework assignments, plagiarism, multiple submissions of the same assignment, cheating on examinations, fabricating information, helping another person to cheat, having unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, or any other action deemed as giving an unfair academic advantage—will result in disciplinary action. For more information on what constitutes ethical academic integrity at TED University, please see the following page: <https://student.tedu.edu.tr/en/student/principles-of-academic-integrity>.

Also please note that, in this course, any form of discrimination and/or harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, or disability, among other personal characteristics or choices, is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Attendance, Make-up, and Late Submission Policies

You are required to attend class regularly, and attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class hour. As noted above, simple attendance counts for 5% of your total grade, but please note that more than 12 class-hours of absence will result in failure (FX) of the course.

Except in cases of documented illness or emergency, there will be no make-ups for any of the course assessments listed above. Late submissions (again, with the exception of documented illness or emergency) will generally be accepted, but at a penalty of 10% (*i.e.*, the equivalent of one full letter grade) of the assessment's overall grade per 24-hour period.

Tentative Course Schedule

Below you will find a week-by-week schedule of the primary-source material on which we will focus. The exact day-by-day schedule will be announced in class and/or via email or Moodle. Please note that, as indicated by the word “tentative” above, this material and the schedule may change according to the progress and “flow” of the class; any changes will be announced in class and/or via email or Moodle. Also please note that you are responsible for checking on and keeping up with the assigned material, and that you must come to the first class of each week having read or watched all of the material for that week.

Week 1 (Feb. 15 + 17): Introduction

- Handout: Some Definitions of Satire, and Related Terms

UNIT 1: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SATIRE

Week 2 (Feb. 22 + 24): “Horatian” vs. “Juvenalian” Satire

- Satire 1 by Horace (65–8 BCE)
- Satire 1 by Juvenal (*c.* 50s?–*c.* 140s? CE)

Week 3 (Mar. 1 + 3): Menippean Satire

- Selection from the *Satyricon* by Petronius (*c.* 27–66 CE): “Trimalchio’s Dinner Party”
- Selection from the *True History* by Lucian (*c.* 125–*c.* 180s? CE)

Week 4 (Mar. 8 + 10): Estates Satire

- “The Land of Cockaigne” from the Kildare Poems (mid-1300s CE)
- Selection from *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (*c.* 1340s–1400): “General Prologue”

UNIT 2: EARLY MODERN SATIRE**Weeks 5 and 6 (Mar. 15 + 17, Mar. 22 + 24): Invective, Libel, Lampoon, and Flying**

- “The Five Senses” (c. 1621–23), anonymous
- “On King Charles” by John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647–1680)
- *Mac Flecknoe* by John Dryden (1631–1700)
- “The Lady’s Dressing Room” by Jonathan Swift (1667–1745)
- Selection from “Epistle to a Lady on the Characters of Women” and “The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated” by Alexander Pope (1688–1744)
- “The Reasons that Induced Dr. S. to Write a Poem called ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’” and “Verses Address’d to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace” by Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762)

Weeks 7 and 8 (Mar. 29 + 31, Apr. 5 + 7): Misanthropic Satire

- “A Satyr against Reason and Mankind” by John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester
- Selection from *Gulliver’s Travels* by Jonathan Swift: “A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms”
- “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift
- **Please note that your midterm examination will cover the material from Weeks 1 through 8.**

UNIT 3: MODERN SATIRE**Week 9 (Apr. 12 + 14): Social Satire**

- *Lady Susan* by Jane Austen (1775–1817)
- *Love & Friendship* (2016), directed by Whit Stillman
- Selected caricatures by William Hogarth (1697–1764), James Gillray (1756–1815), Thomas Rowlandson (1757–1827), George Cruikshank (1792–1878), and *Punch* magazine (1841–2002)

Week 10 (Apr. 19 + 21): Political Satire

- *Animal Farm* by George Orwell (1903–1950)

Week 11 (Apr. 26 + 28): Wit, Wisdom, and Satirical Science Fiction

- “Arrangement in Black and White,” “Frustration,” “Good Souls,” “Indian Summer,” “Interview,” “Inventory,” “Love Song,” “Observation,” and “Résumé” by Dorothy Parker (1893–1967)
- “EPICAC” and “Unready to Wear” by Kurt Vonnegut (1922–2007)

- “The School” by Donald Barthelme (1931–1989)
- **Please note that there will be no class on the week of May 2–6 due to the Eid al-Fitr (Ramazan) holiday.**

Week 12 (May 10 + 12): Satire and Parody in Film and Television

- Scenes from *Blazing Saddles* (1974), directed by Mel Brooks (b. 1926)
- Scenes from *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* (1979), directed by Terry Jones (1942–2020)
- Scenes from *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984), directed by Rob Reiner (b. 1947)
- Scenes from *Scream* (1996), directed by Wes Craven (1939–2015)
- Scenes from *The Office* by Ricky Gervais (b. 1961) and Stephen Merchant (b. 1974) and the American remake, *The Office*

Week 13 (May 17 + 19): “Fake News” and Satirical Stand-up Comedy

- Selections from *The Onion*
- Selections from *The Colbert Report*
- Routines from the stand-up comedy of George Carlin (1937–2008) and Richard Pryor (1940–2005)

Week 14 (May 24 + 26): Review and Preparation for Final

- **Please note that your final examination will be comprehensive, covering the material from Weeks 1 through 14.**